

What is claimed is:

1. A multimedia electronic mail system comprising:

a multimedia data server for storing a multimedia data to transmit according to a request;

5 a sending client having a mailer, which registers said multimedia data to said multimedia data server and indicates the identifiers of said multimedia data to a plurality of clients using an electronic mail; and

a plurality of receiving clients each having a mailer  
10 for receiving said electronic mail transmitted from said sending client, for obtaining said multimedia data stored in said multimedia data server through a network,

wherein said multimedia data server includes retention  
period information on said multimedia data, and reference  
15 client information consisting of identifiers of entire receiving clients which may possibly refer to said multimedia data, to control to delete said multimedia data according to said retention period information and said reference client information.

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2. The multimedia electronic mail system according to claim 1, wherein said multimedia data stored in said multimedia data server is deleted when either the number of receiving clients having a possibility of referring to  
25 said multimedia data becomes zero or the preset retention period of said multimedia data has expired.

3. The multimedia electronic mail system according to claim 2 wherein, when said sending client transmits an electronic mail containing the multimedia data identifier to said plurality of receiving clients, said mailer in the sending client indicates to said multimedia data server both said multimedia data identifier and the identifiers of said plurality of receiving clients.

4. The multimedia electronic mail system according to claim 2, further comprising a mail relay server for relaying an electronic mail transmitted from a sending client, wherein, when relaying said electronic mail, said mail relay server analyzes the received electronic mail contents to obtain said multimedia data identifier and the identifiers of said plurality of receiving clients to indicate to said multimedia data server.

5. The multimedia electronic mail system according to claim 2 wherein said each plurality of receiving clients analyzes the contents of the received electronic mail to obtain said multimedia data identifier to indicate to said multimedia data server together with said receiving client identifiers

6. The multimedia electronic mail system according to claim 3, wherein

when a user in said each receiving client determines

the received mail being unwanted any longer and desires to delete, said receiving client indicates to said multimedia data server that said multimedia data corresponding to the identifier contained in the received  
5 electronic mail is no longer unwanted, and,

said multimedia data server updates the reference client information corresponding to said multimedia data based on said indication received from said received client.

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7. The multimedia electronic mail system according to either of claims 1 wherein

said electronic mail transmitted from said sending client contains a retention period of said multimedia data,

15 said receiving client is provided with a means to confirm, on receipt of said electronic mail, the users therein whether or not said retention period is to be extended before the retention period expires,

when a request to extend said retention period is issued  
20 by a user, said request is transferred with said multimedia data identifier to said multimedia data server, and

said multimedia data server, upon receiving said request from said receiving client, updates the retention period information of said multimedia data corresponding  
25 to said received multimedia data identifier.

8. The multimedia electronic mail system according to

either of claims 1 to 6 wherein

said multimedia data server indicates the retention period information to the entire receiving clients described in said reference client information, prior to  
5 the expiration of said retention period, ,

said receiving client provides a means to confirm before the expiration of retention period whether or not said retention period is to be extended,

a request for extending said retention period issued  
10 by said user is transferred with said multimedia data identifier to said multimedia data server, and

said multimedia data server, upon receiving said request from said receiving client, updates the retention period information of said multimedia data corresponding  
15 to said received multimedia data identifier.

9. The multimedia electronic mail system according to claim 8 wherein said multimedia data server indicates to said sending client the information on a receiving client  
20 having issued no indication whether the multimedia data concerned is unwanted any longer nor a request for extending the retention period, in spite of having received an electronic mail from said sending client.

25 10. The multimedia electronic mail system according to claims 9 wherein

said multimedia data server manages a password for

each multimedia data to transfer to the sending client,  
said sending client, when transmitting a multimedia  
electronic mail, transmits said password as well,

said receiving client, when obtaining said multimedia  
5 data from said multimedia data server, transmits said  
password and the receiving client identifier to said  
multimedia data server, and

said multimedia data server compares said password  
and said receiving client identifier received from said  
10 receiving client with the corresponding data stored in said  
management information storage equipment, and permits said  
receiving client to acquire said multimedia data only in  
case the comparison result coincided.

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